

they seek care and benefits because of the impact of toxic exposure on their lives.

In the worst care scenarios, folks are paying the price with their lives—veterans and heroes like Sergeant First Class Robinson, for whom this bill is named after.

Look, we have made some incredible advances as a country over our history when it comes to taking care of our servicemembers both in-theater and after they get back home. The survival on the battlefield now compared to 50 years ago has been improved amazingly.

Prosthetics—we have done some amazing work with prosthetics for the folks who have come back who are missing limbs. We have been working hard on mental health. We are not where we need to be, but we are making some advances. We have got more stuff to do, particularly in the area of transition and implementation of alternate forms of mental healthcare.

But the fact is, with toxic exposure, we have never done a good job. This bill will put the VA and put this Nation on the right track to addressing decades of inaction and failure by our government—by us—to pay for the cost of the war.

So what does it do? It expands eligibility—expands eligibility—for VA healthcare to more than 3½ million combat veterans exposed to burn pits since 9/11.

It supports our post-9/11 and Vietnam-era veterans by removing the burden of proof for 23 presumptive conditions caused by toxic exposure, from cancers to lung diseases.

It establishes a framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure. So why is this important? Well, you know how the Senate works. Oftentimes, it takes a long time to get much done, and it has taken an act of Congress—literally, an act of Congress—to get these presumptives approved in the past.

Now the VA is going to have a structure where they can follow the science and get these toxic exposures covered, the ones that are going to happen in the future—and, unfortunately, I am afraid that they will happen in the future so this structure is important.

This bill also gives the VA the tools it needs to bolster its workforce, to establish more healthcare facilities, to improve claims processing, which will better meet the immediate and future needs of every veteran that the VA serves.

I have talked about the costs. The costs are \$287 billion over 10—significant, very significant, but it is a cost of war.

Keep in mind that this substitute—because of the work that the staffs have done in a bipartisan way—is \$50 billion less than the House-passed toxic exposure bill.

So we have done our best to make sure that this bill meets the needs of

our veterans and also meets the needs of our taxpayers.

This is the right thing to do, and it is the right thing to get done today because right now our veterans are paying the cost. They are the only ones paying the cost, and they cannot afford to wait any longer.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lisa M. Gomez, of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 6 months ago, the Washington Post published an extremely disturbing report.

According to the report, a man in his mid-20s was stopped near the house of a Supreme Court Justice carrying a weapon and burglary tools. He reportedly told police he intended to murder the Justice. Reportedly, he indicated he was angry at the decision he thinks the Court may reach in an upcoming case in light of the unconscionable leak from a few weeks back.

So this is where we are. This is where we are. If these reports are correct, it was an assassination attempt against a sitting Justice, or something close to it.

This is exactly—exactly—the kind of event that many feared that the terrible breach of the Court's rules and norms could fuel. This is exactly the kind of event that many worried the unhinged, reckless, apocalyptic rhetoric from prominent figures toward the Court going back many months and especially in recent weeks could make more likely.

This is exactly—exactly—why the Senate passed legislation very shortly after the leak to enhance the police protection for Justices and their families. This is commonsense, non-controversial legislation that passed in this Chamber—in this Chamber—unanimously.

But House Democrats have spent weeks blocking—blocking the measure that passed here unanimously related

to security for Supreme Court Justices. The House's Democrats have refused to take it up.

Now, look, that needs to change, and it needs to change right now. Right now. House Democrats must pass this bill and they need to do it today. No more fiddling around with this. They need to pass it today. They need to stop their multiweek blockade against the Supreme Court security bill and pass it before the sun sets today.

I will have more to say on this subject as the facts continue to unfold.

INFLATION

Mr. President, on a completely different matter, rising food prices have been one of the most relentless and painful aspects of the historic inflation unfolding on Democrats' watch.

One year ago, President Biden's White House bragged—bragged—that the cost of an Independence Day cook-out would be 16-cents cheaper than the year before. Well, in the past year food prices have jumped more than 9 percent. So that same spread won't be cents cheaper, it will be dollars more expensive.

Grocery store prices have risen at their fastest rate since 1980, and at full-service restaurants, prices have jumped more in the past 12 months than any year on record. Any year on record. There has been 17 straight months of rising food prices.

So this is not a "Putin" price hike. As one of my constituents in Nancy, KY, put it a few months back, "Many people are scared that they might have to choose between eating and heating the house."

Democrats' failed policies have made it harder to feed a family in America, but the pain isn't limited to the supermarket or to the dinner table, it includes producers at every step of the supply chain.

According to the owner of Jot 'Em Down Store, which boasts the oldest lunch counter in Lexington, rising costs have come from all directions. "This year, we've been hampered by supply chain issues, rising gas prices [and] inflation . . ."

In my hometown of Louisville, the operator of one stand at the local farmers market elaborated, "The feed to feed animals has gone up. Packaging, processing has gone up. . . . Butter has gone up three times in the last 4 weeks." Our food producers are feeling the pinch.

A soybean farmer in Muhlenberg County put it this way: "I can put out two, maybe three crops in years past for what it's costing this year."

A corn grower in Christian County says rising prices are "crippling family farms like mine."

Of course, Kentucky farmers are not alone. Across America, farm country has been absolutely hammered on Democrats' watch. And by the Biden administration's own data, farm production expenses from animal feed to diesel fuel are climbing even higher this year than last year.